

24th Oct 52 Tavistock Sq.

1938

Your letter I may tell you very nearly had fatal consequences. I very nearly rushed off to Cassis, so intoxicating were your words; and the sense of heat; and vines; and beauty; and freedom; and silence; and no telephones. You very nearly had me on you; and then what a curse you would have found it! Only the timely revelation of the complete failure of our marriage prevented it. Only just in time to stop me taking my ticket. Its an awful confession--if I werent so hurried I would conceal it; but the fact is we are so unhappy apart that I cant come. Thats the worst failure imaginable-- that marriage, as I suddenly for the first time realised walking the Square, reduces one to damnable servility. Cant be helped. Im going to write a comedy about it; But if I had come your perfect globe would have been smashed; you know how careful I have to be, too, to bait my hook with little minnows and other tit bits to disguise my rapacity for your society with whats acceptable to you. Had I come the hook would have been bare; all this winter youd have had nothing but the rusty steel to grate your teeth upon. Also, its a good thing that Wolves and Bells should be separated sometimes in order that each may inspissate their identity. Enough. No news of Anne.

London is appalling, but also I admit fascinating -- in its meretricious way. Also Mouth Street Market, with a black corpse of a horse among flowers and cheap glass has its appeal; also Hampton Court where we went yesterday in the balm of a perfect summers day was worth all your black vs/aged spectatcular south. We roamed the park, smelt the flowers, and mooned along the galleries where, thanks to Roger, I'm now seeing in chairs pictures tapestries a remote world of inexplicable significance. I think the art of painting is the art for ones old age. I respect it more and more. I adore its severity; its bareness from impurity. All books are now rank with the slimy seaweed of politics; mouldy and mildewed. I wish I could settle to pure fiction; indeed had to rush headlong into a novel; as a relief; but am now back at Roger and the compromise of biopgraphy again. That reminds me; please will you and Duncan write something quick about the Borough Polytechnic. Any facts. Who were the artists? What were the subjects? Does the dining room still exist? Can one see it? Do answer this. I'm toiling in a maze; and no one so far has thrown me a single bone of help.

Now to gossip. Jack Hutch, youll be glad to hear was let blood copiously, and has recovered. Mary says it was a slight attack. He is at work again. This was imparted to me as I sat talking to Colefax. You see I get from people what you get from vines.

L's play is being
considered by the
Group.

Walt aged Bob's wife

V.B)

NYPL

These distorted human characters are to me what the olive tree against the furrowed hill is to you. Colefax is an essential part of the composition; wrinkled I admit, I was led, by a spirit in my feet, (that is Helley) to denounce her life to her; her snobbery; her falsity; her damned dressed up dinner party society. I will only dine with you, I bellowed, without you, I become so vehement, if I may walk out of my own house, as I am, to your door. Done, she cried. Today I'm invited to meet Max Beerbohm and Lord Ivor without washing; and will bring Asherwood on the same terms? What am I to say? Why do I seek to change society, when it means that one has to act on one's words? L. says I can rat. I'm in a rush; so what news is there? Desmond's mother is dead, of cancer. Then we had tea with Margery yesterday to meet deaf Agnes. But deaf Agnes was involved in a street accident. Margery much upset. At last, deaf Agnes very fluttered arrived. Walking with Lady Lawrence in Chelsea, suddenly she saw Lady Lawrence flat on the ground, pouring blood with her face cut open and an omnibus advancing. Deaf Agnes was surprised. To cut a long story short--I had to write on a paper all my questions-- Lady L. was carried home; Dr Quackenbosh summoned; and a nurse. So we proceeded to discuss Sir Edward's views on Darwinism; this had to be gingerly done, as she disapproves of any truth told about the Frys. But she was a charming apparition, wild eyed, flying haired, magnanimous; walked still in the 19th. century; shouting like a lost sheep in a gale. Helen Anrep was there----by the way I had a long evening alone with her; and I'm in rather a distress about her. This is highly confidential. She has dismissed Flossie and does all her cooking and cleaning herself, being battered and altogether scatterbrained, because she has an over draught; In fact she seems in very low water. Oughtnt one to help? I've no doubt I could lend her or give her something towards the overdraft; on which she's paying interest. What do you think? But then there's the horror of her toadies and claimants. Is it hopeless to insist that she has a maid? She told me to tell you that owing to Rogers' proofs she can't come to Cassis yet. But she is coming later. Meanwhile of course Freese is preying on her; and the female oaf is utterly intolerable. Analysis which costs £100 is useless; yet she must be analysed so Helen must do the cooking... Now Rose Macalvey is ringing up; also Stephen Tennant. I tell you this not to impress you; but only to show the meretricious fascination of London. Thank God we're off for two days on Wednesday to M. H. and to travelling our books. Then back to a vast family dinner given by Mrs Woolf; who is aging and decaying so rapidly that the leaves seem to drop in to the tea cups. Everyone loathes the idea; she insists. A dinner at a club. And you in bliss. I've no room for more.

B
But no doubt you prefer Helen Anrep. Why?
When shall I see you?
H.M. 12/24/69

There's a rush at the Press - John all over the place. I can't get time to write, so send this, in default of letter. The drop drop of fascinating postcard continues to keep me on edge. What a torturer Q is! I hope to see him.

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B. But no doubt you prefer Helen Anrep. Why? When shall I see you? 12/29/69

52 Tavistock Sq. Nov. 2nd.

1938

You are a good dolphin to write, and the facts about the Boro. Poly; will come in very useful. Now that we're on facts let us stick to them. About Helen. I think her overdraft is about £200. So she said the night she dined here. And she promised to find out exactly and tell me; as I think she was then ready to let me lend it her. I heard no more; so wrote and asked and have had no answer. Mabel says Flossie goes twice a week to clean; but last time she went Helen was away. I'll ring up and see if I can get any facts. but you know how vague she is---didn't know what she was paying, but thought the interest came to £10 yearly. And she certainly seemed weighed down and altogether rather under the weather or water or whatever the phrase is.

About houses--we actually went over one in Endsleigh St yesterday, being struck with the dream of buying a large freehold, housing ourselves and the press and having rooms to let. But it was hopeless; all the top rooms cut in two and mere garrets. Our lease lasts till 1941; so unless we can get a freehold, and sublet this we shall have to stay on. But we're much inclined to your plan of country living with a room here.

I suppose you and Clive would move any time.

And we shall have the Press to house which complicates matters. But with John in charge, we are, or shall be, free from London; and I agree with you, it grows intolerable. One party lasts me at least a

a month. "The perpetual fizz and fritter is inevitable and if only Sussex weren't so accessible, I would willingly domesticate myself there. So I'll keep my eyes open for large houses that could be let out in rooms. That's the facts; My Colefax party was perhaps worth going to, as I didn't dress, and sat next Max, and we talked writers shop. He's a charmer; rubicund; gay; apparently innocent; but in fact very astute and full of airy fantasies. He invented obituaries, and has an extraordinary gift for telling little stories that he makes up on the spur of the moment. When we went to Hastings the other day an old man stopped me in the street and said. 'Have I the honour of addressing Miss Edith Sitwell?' "I'm Mrs Woolf," I said. He then swept off his hat and said "Not my old friend Leslie ^{NYPL} Stephen's daughter?" "Who have I the honour of addressing" I said. "Somebody whose name you've never heard," he said.... "Coulson Kernahan!" I told Max this; and he instantly told me the whole history of C. K's life; how he'd written a book called God and the Ant; sold one million copies; also one called Celebrities ~~he~~ knew---how he visited Lord Roberts "who rose from his chair and looked at me with eyes--- were they blue? were they hazel? were they brown? No they were just soldiers eyes" He also wrote a book called "celebrities I did not know. Max Beerbohm. *for me* ... How ~~much~~ much was true and how much invented I don't know. But it was very amusing as he told it; but I can't record it. Then there was Somerset Maugham. a grim figure; rat eyed; dead man cheeked, unshaven; a criminal I should have said had I met him in a bus. Very suspicious and tortured. But you've met him.

And Lord Ivor; and Lord de la Warr; and Christopher I. who seemed all agog with amusement; but is a shifty quicksilver little slip of a creature--very nimble and rather inscrutable and on his guard.

I had no talk with him; but he said he had heard of Yeh and would come and dine. Will you come and meet him?

Oh what a joy to think you're coming back! I feel like a very old sponge that hears water dripping at the thought. I get so pulverised without you; you're somehow the breath of life; did I say water? Well, as usual I'm mixing my metaphors writing in a hurry, after my mornings work. We have the Spenders to dine tomorrow and Joan Masdale, now Rendel; and Bunny I think.

And on Friday we go to Rodmell; and Q. dines--that I shall enjoy--I long to see my nephews and my nieces; but there's a L. P. meeting; and then there's Guy Fox; and Q. says Clive and Janice are to be down; so doubtless we shall all meet. But what's the point, when you and D. and A. aren't there?

Julian's book ~~came~~^{Monday} out on Thursday, and we sent the copies as you said. The reviews will begin ~~this~~^{next} week I suppose, ~~on next~~. I'll send them.

I've been looking at it, and am sure it was a good thing to print it. He comes out so much of a whole. And the letters are so unself-conscious that nobody could feel them too personal. Also I think it makes something rather important, and not a mere scrap book--I mean though there are so many different

people writing, they all fall into line. It is a far more solid book than the John Cornford. There's been the usual rush and chaos here; Miss Strachan away; ill; John talks and talks... Mrs Lehmann appeared; the Sunday Times book show on us this week; indeed I had to take to doing up parcels again; and L. worked in the press till eight. But this is only the after effects of that damnable crisis, which L. is discussing once more with K. Martin, as I write. *Heut a New Thalerman to enlighten you.*

After tea:

I got on to Helen, at last. She never got my letter. She says her overdraft is £150; I've arranged that I will pay this myself. We can discuss later about subscriptions; but as I've got the money, I think it's much simpler for me to do it. The thing is-- can you tell me what my commitments are to the ~~Studio~~ Studio school? I thought I promised to guarantee £50 a year for 2 years. Do you think this will be wanted? I told Helen I'd find out from you before saying for certain that I can pay the £150. So could you let me have a line-- I should like to pay her as soon as possible. I gather she's rather anxious to have it settled. I said I was telling you.

NYPL

Well this is a dull dismal interrupted letter. In between paragraphs I've been to Selfridges; ordered a goose; walked across the Park; come home to find John to tea; and am altogether more in favour of a country life than ever. Lord I wish you were back and were coming round. It's as bright as June here; no mistral; but I admit we have fires. I'll write to Angelica to curse her for her absolutely exacerbating, infuriating, intriguing and preposterous system of post cards; ones missing; I can't make it all out; and have scratched a hole in my head worrying to connect the Colonel with his private parts.

*There's an account of Corin's
Babel & Adventure in Benson.*

Manuscript 229/69

1938 Nov 11

Monday 52 TT.

I don't think she will reach before
you leave. To its only

to wish you a good journey.

And I'll wait to Paris.

I keep any journey till

then. Your letter only came

Yesterday. So I told John to

keep the books.

Don't be rash at Comen Keir
I come home to me

but no more.

all Paris.

25 Jan 1939

26 Jan
1939

Wednesday

Of course you've given me what
I'd rather have than anything.
And you know, darling love,
how I thank you.

(29 May 1939)

Monk's House,
 Rodmell,
 near Lewes,
 Sussex.

Monday

This small offering is to be spent
simply & solely on Models
 Duncan & Angelica are witnesses;
 & if a penny goes on any
 other object (to wit, for bills or
 boots) then such report: The
 Cheque will be stopped: complete
 conjunction with result - Do,
 Good Dolphin Be Warned

B.